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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

I don't know how well or poorly you folks do with regard to the amount of spam you get on a daily basis. Have you ever counted the number of garbage messages that you get? I don't, usually, but I think it sometimes averages about 20-30 a day, between all of my various e-mail addresses. I routinely delete them as I scan the message headers. It's amazing what some of these things are about. I've probably mentioned it once or twice before, but do these spammers really believe that people are going respond to some of this garbage? Who am I fooling? Of course they do! There's a sucker born every minute!

Do you ever open up and read any of your spam? I rarely do, fearing the possibility of one of these messages containing a virus. But, I occasionally get tempted to see just how these spammers put together their little schemes. And sometimes I'm curious enough to get a cheap laugh at some of the stupidity of these things. Most of the time, it's a waste of my time! Plainly put, spam is a nuisance. It's not freedom of speech, it's an invasion of my personal space, or however you wish to describe it. I hope that the politicians come up with a viable anti-spam law soon.

Speaking of violating my space, it's nice and quiet at home these days! Since the enactment of the "do not call" list, I don't get any more calls from telemarketers! It is so nice not to be bothered with those calls a dozen times a day! If you're lucky, you also signed up and have the same results as I have.

Anyone need some leaves? I can't believe what my yard looks like these days! We've done some cleaning up, but it seems like our trees keep producing more and more leaves! The day after we cleaned up the back yard last weekend, the yard looked as if we didn't do a thing! If the weather cooperates this weekend, maybe we'll get everything cleaned up, again. And maybe the trees will also be bare so we won't have to worry about going back out again, and again. We'll see.

Until next time...

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Atari800MacX Version 1.6 Released

Version 1.6 of the Atari800MacX Atari 8-bit emulator has been released. Atari800MacX is a native Mac OS X Cocoa port of the Atari 800 emulator. (<http://atari800.sourceforge.net/>) The major change in this version was bringing the Atari800MacX source base up to the current release of the base Atari800 emulator. This resulted in several new features and several bug fixes over the previous release. Please visit the Atari800MacX page for complete details about what's new and to download the latest version (source code is also available).

<http://members.cox.net/atarimac/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. First, let me apologize for not having a column in last week's issue. Even though there are no doubt a few people out there who breathed a sigh of relief, I don't like missing deadlines.

It was really quite annoying, as a matter of fact. The AC adaptor on my laptop (the only computer I've got set up to do my column on) just decided that it was going to stop working. The battery didn't last as long as I thought it would, and what little I had been able to accomplish was locked up tight until I got the AC adaptor replaced.

Well, the company got the adaptor replaced relatively quickly and painlessly, but by the time the computer was back in action it was too late to get the column in.

Did I mention that this computer and its AC adaptor are less than six months old? Hell, my STacy's AC adaptor is still going strong, and it's got to be almost 15 years old now! True, the STacy doesn't get fired up daily anymore, but I know for a fact that it's got more hours on it than this shiny new Intel machine.

What I as going to talk about last week was something that gets on my nerves from time to time... The fact that, more and more, we're living in a cookie-cutter world.

Now, I fully understand the fact that cars tend to have four wheels for a reason and that an idea isn't necessarily good just because it's different. But it seems to me that we should be enjoying more choices, not fewer. Computers have allowed us to do some truly amazing things in the past twenty or so years. Then why is it that we choose to do fewer and fewer of them?

I went to one of those chain bookstores the other day. I used to go to this store every other week or so just to browse through their Nature &

Science section. Books on astronomy, geology, computers, and all the other stuff that tends to catch my fancy just sitting waiting for me... what a wonderful situation!

But lately, there hasn't been much of a science section. And what there was of it was really pretty sad. The books that they classified as science were... hmmm... how can I convey this... they were 'fringe' at best. Astrology IS NOT a science, ASTRONOMY is. I want stuff on cosmology, archaeology, chemistry, and the like, not "How to Build a Bird House".

What we need (or what I need, at any rate) is a bookstore that actually loves books. Yeah, that's right... I remember bookstores that actually loved, revered, appreciated, and cherished books. Books were something special in and of themselves. Not because they were first editions, not because they were rare, not because they contained the answers to the mysteries of the ages. But because they were books. They contained knowledge. Their value was measured simply by the fact that they were written and published. These days, books are really no more than a commodity. Their value usually tallied up not by the depth of the thoughts they expound or by the insight they may offer, but by the mark they make on a balance sheet.

And I'm afraid that we're all poorer because of it.

Now let's get to the UseNet stuff.

From the comp.sys.atari.st Newsgroup
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'Rob' asks a very interesting question:

"I have a falcon that has german Tos, therefore all language is in german, I want to change it so that everything appears in english. Is there any way I can do this by using the a disk version TOS. I don't mind having to use a boot disk."

Peter West tells Rob:

"I am not 100% sure, but I think *all* Falcons had universal TOSs which could be selected from the NVRAM, using NVCONFIG.CPX. This is a 4-part CPX, though this isn't immediately clear. Just click on the right-facing arrow at bottom right to bring up the Keyboard panel. It offers 17 - count them, 17! - keyboard layouts (besides the main European ones also Turkish and Saudi!!!) and 5 languages, which should be enough for almost anyone!"

Mark Bedingfield adds:

"all Falcons have the same version of tos. You need to set the nvram to English, you can also specify the keyboard etc. Have a look here, <http://storage.atari-source.com/atari/mirrors/ftp.lip6.fr/pub/atari/Falcon/Utilities/> and download nvram.zip. Do be careful because an incorrect setting can bugar things up."

Joseph Place asks about editing jpeg images:

"What's the best (or most available) image editor for ST/Falcon? I'd like to edit some jpeg pictures for my website. I have APEX media, but it will not save in .jpg format."

'Jean' tells Joseph:

"May I suggest Vision to edit/save JPG images..."

<http://vision.atari.org>"

Jamez Valant adds:

"Well you can also use Smurf, which also can't save Jpeg I think, but with Apex comes nice tga<>jpg cpx, so you can use that. You can also use Photoline, a photoshop like app..."

Kenneth Medin adds:

"Or use any editing app you like and then convert to jpg with the now free CharlyImage from Wilhelm Mikroelektronik GmbH. It's a free download from there website but some basic understanding of German is needed as it never got translated to English as far as I know."

Marshall Lake asks about putting his old TT back to work:

"I recently dusted off an Atari TT I had sitting in the closet and it still boots fine (should I have expected anything else? . I'd like to install Linux on it and add it to my home network. But first I need to replace the small internal hard drive. It's been a long while since I've been active in the Atari computer arena. Can someone give me pointers and recommendations as to what type of drive to replace the internal hard drive with? It's a SCSI drive, right?"

Greg Goodwin tells Marshall:

"Yep, a SCSI. A 2 gig SCSI is pretty common for a lot of TT users I've noticed, though naturally larger ones can be used."

Marshall tells Greg:

"I don't have much experience with SCSI HDs. Do I need to concern myself with the type of SCSI or will any SCSI HD do?"

Mark Duckworth tells Marshall:

"You want 50 pin internal ribbon cable. Lots of newer scsi's are wide or small connector. You don't want that. You want the old style 50 pin. You need to make sure it's not differential or LVD (probably a scsi drive with a 50 pin internal ribbon connector won't be). Then I'm pretty sure TT can't accept parity but maybe it can. Plug it in and go

PS: Some of these newer drives that are wide or ultra scsi work just fine with the right adapters though it's a waste of your money since the TT can't make use of the better scsi speeds."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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AP Praises Freedom Fighters Video Game

"Freedom Fighters," for Xbox, PlayStation2, GameCube and the PC, is more than an entertaining lesson in alternate history. It's extremely fun, with the hallmarks of all good video games: responsive controls, intense action and challenging opponents.

In the video game, it's up to you to lead the resistance against communism, which is stronger than ever. After dragging Mexico behind the iron curtain, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is moving in on the final prize: the United States.

You are Christopher Stone, an average American citizen who must take up arms and fight back the Communist hordes, who have picked New York as the entry point for their invasion.

I haven't enjoyed this kind of schmaltzy patriotic entertainment since 1984, when as a youth I watched Patrick Swayze and his scrappy group of teen warriors shout "Wolverines!" as they battled the Soviets on the silver screen in "Red Dawn."

Best of all is a feature called "charisma." As you advance through the smoking ruins of Manhattan to the really tough battles on Governor's Island, your charisma meter rises.

The higher your charisma, the more freedom fighters you command. By the

time you've reached the concluding battle, you'll have a small army of 12 fellow patriots who you can order to attack, defend or stay at your side.

It's an adrenaline rush, leading your band of rebels through the snowy streets of midtown, dank underground sewers and hidden prisoner of war camps.

"Freedom Fighters" features some of the best artificial intelligence I've seen in a video game.

Your comrades don't stand around, waiting to die. If you order them to charge into a swarm of gunfire, they'll duck and take cover whenever possible, often working together to flank the enemy.

Just remember: The Russians have the same sharp battle sense.

I did have a few issues. Before battles, you view a series of maps laying out the mission. Some levels, however, have multiple maps, and it's often unclear which area you need to clear out first. Be prepared for some trial-and-error.

I also wish "Freedom Fighters" lasted longer. I finished the game in two afternoons on the normal difficulty setting. And once you've won, there's no real point in playing again, unless you have the PC version, which offers a multiplayer mode where you can team up with others to fight the Russians.

But these are all minor quibbles. "Freedom Fighters" is an excellent game that's hard without being impossible, rewarding without being frustrating.

"Freedom Fighters," released by Electronic Arts, costs \$49.95. Three stars out of four.

Sony Details Gaming-Music Player, iPod Rival

Japan's Sony Corp. on Tuesday detailed plans for a much-anticipated all-in-one handheld gaming device that includes a digital music and video player and could even act as mobile telephone.

Officials of the world's largest consumer electronics maker also said Sony would launch a rival to Apple Computer Inc's iPod digital music player next year for as little as \$60.

Sony described a prototype for its PSP gaming device - due out before the end of 2004 - during a presentation to U.S. investors that reiterated plans to restore profitability at the company.

"PSP will be the Walkman of the future," declared Ken Kutaragi, Sony's executive deputy president and head of its gaming business, comparing a PSP prototype to Sony's highly successful earlier generation of music players.

PSP is designed to rival Nintendo Co. Ltd's Game Boy handheld game player, mobile phone maker Nokia Oyj's N-Gage wireless gaming device and Apple's iPod and iTunes music download service.

Sony plans to eventually add telecommunication features, Kutaragi told a news conference afterward, lending credence to speculation PSP devices

would also serve as mobile phones.

Sony currently envisions a device that looks somewhat similar to Nokia's recently introduced N-Gage gaming phone, but with a bigger display that makes it look more like a handheld television.

The "concept model" showed off by Kutaragi was a one-piece device designed to be grasped in two hands, with a bright, color screen roughly 4.5 inches (11.4 cm) in diameter, he told Reuters.

"PSP will not be one kind of product," Kutaragi said. Rather, it is a platform of related devices with the capacity to add or subtract features, he said, while stressing that final design details are not expected to be revealed until later.

While crediting Apple and its chief executive, Steve Jobs, for the success of the iPod, Sony officials said the PSP would allow consumers to watch music videos as well as listen to digital tunes.

"We are taking on iPod with our new device," another Sony official said. "We are coming at him (Steve Jobs) on that front."

Sony executives said that next year it will introduce versions of a rival music player to the iPod for as little as \$60, a price only one-quarter or less than the \$200 to \$400 Apple charges for various versions of its sleek product.

Apple's lead in innovating in the portable music sector practically invented by Sony has been highlighted as typical of the problems at the Japanese company, which last month reported a 25 percent drop in quarterly profits.

Video Games Are Addictive - Scientists

Computer game fanatics should not be labeled addicts, although many players say they are hooked on a hobby that is affecting their social lives, scientists said on Tuesday.

Some evidence exists that games stimulate the same areas in the brain as alcohol and other drugs, psychologists, sociologists and others were told at the world's first interdisciplinary games conference here.

But unlike the addictive substances, there is no medicine to deal with compulsive gaming behavior, they heard.

"Is (the popular online game) Everquest addictive? Well, it's no more addictive than school or work. The time invested in those also make them addictive," said Florence Chee, a research student at Simon Fraser University in Canada.

Scientific interest in the multibillion dollar computer games industry has mushroomed in recent years, after teenagers in several countries killed themselves and others after playing violent games. Various governments have put pressure on the industry to add a health warning to games packages.

But many players actually described themselves as addicts, said Stephen

Kline, a social psychology professor and media analyst at Simon Fraser University.

"Fifteen percent of Everquest players say: 'I'm addicted'. Thirty percent can be categorized as addicts," he said.

Although he used the word "addiction" in the classic Greek sense of "devotion," his survey of hundreds of heavy online games players showed half of them reported family conflict and romantic failure as a result of their hobby.

Heavy games players can play an average 17 to 26 hours a week. The online games, in which players battle with opponents online, are considered the most gripping and time-consuming.

Children from the age of 10 are now starting to play online games, he said, and families should know it is radically different from comics.

"Game entertainment is not a classic media experience. It has a potency that offers a new psychological experience," Kline said, adding he could imagine violent experiences in games to spill over in real life.

Other scientists, who like Chee have carried out scientific surveys, said heavy games players were in fact sociable and not the pathological loners they are often made out to be.

Sociology Professor Holin Lin at National Taiwan University discovered many players were members of an online 'clan' to try to become more successful against opponents in the game. She also found many had relationships with clan members in real life.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -          Online Users Growl & Purr!
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PhillyClassic Blasts Into NBC Technology Expo!

Philadelphia, PA (Nov. 7, 2003) -- PhillyClassic, The East Coast Video Gamer's Event, is taking center stage as the premiere interactive gaming content provider at the NBC10 Technology and Lifestyles Expo taking place at the Fort Washington Expo Center this weekend, November 8-9, 2003. The event is free to the public and hours are 10am-5pm both days.

PhillyClassic is the largest video game expo on the East Coast, now in its fifth year. Founder David Newman said "We're excited to be partnering with NBC10 on their show. It's a terrific concept. NBC does three of these shows across the country in three high-tech markets: Dallas, Baltimore, and Philadelphia."

"Our traveling video game exhibit, The PhillyClassic Video Game Challenge Through Time, is a perfect way for NBC10 showgoers to have some fun, play lots of games on both classic and modern game consoles, and get a sample of

what our full-blown show is all about, coming up in March of 2004. The NBC10 Technology and Lifestyles Expo is where more than 50 companies will showcase their latest consumer and small business products and services. Exhibits will focus on all areas of life that are affected by technology: home automation, online financing, extreme entertainment, state of the art medical equipment and distance learning, are just some of the products and services that will be on exhibit.

PhillyClassic is dedicated to giving video game fans, both new and old, a great weekend of playing arcade and home console games, competing in tournaments, and buying, selling, and trading videogame systems, software, and accessories.

For arcade fans, PhillyClassic will also be bringing five coin-op arcade games to the NBC10 event through their official arcade sponsor, Quarterarcade.com.

And for people who want to learn the ins and outs of creating videogames, PhillyClassic will also have staff on hand from Videogame.net, the creators of the leading hands-on videogame design camps and school programs. PhillyClassic also plans to pull out the stops at the NBC10 Expo with prizes, giveaways, and drawings for console systems, games, accessories, T-shirts, and other goodies from major sponsors EBGames and Dave & Busters.

More details can be found at <http://www.phillyclassic.com>.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Senate Eyes Internet Access Deal, Vote by Next Week

Senators on Friday abandoned an attempt to vote on a bill to permanently ban Internet access taxes but said they hoped to agree by next week on a controversial definition of Internet access.

The Senate leadership canceled a Friday vote on the bill amid Democrats' concerns it could unintentionally cost state and local governments billions in lost tax revenues.

"We are talking in good faith with them to get a reasonable compromise," Virginia Republican Sen. George Allen told reporters after the vote was nixed, saying votes on amendments and even on final passage were possible next week.

A moratorium that had been in place since 1998 expired Oct. 31 and some lawmakers fear states and localities will start levying new taxes on the Internet unless Congress reinstates it soon.

The House of Representatives voted last month to make the ban on access taxes permanent and include high speed access services such as DSL lines

under the moratorium. That bill also eliminates a carve-out for taxes in place before the ban was first passed.

A nearly identical bill has cleared the Senate Commerce Committee, but opposition has stiffened over the past couple of weeks as state and local governments say broad wording could cost as much as \$9 billion in tax revenues a year by 2006.

They worry the bill's definition of Internet access could undermine their ability to tax phone calls, software sales and other activities likely to migrate to the Internet over the next several years.

Proponents reject that interpretation and estimates of state and local tax revenue loss by the Congressional Budget Office come in lower, showing a loss by 2008 of around \$195 million.

But the CBO said costs could rise if states were truly unable to collect sales and use taxes or gross receipts taxes on communications services, such as local and long distance phone calls, offered via the Internet.

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein joined other Democrats who said they were in favor of an access-tax moratorium but concerned about unintended consequences for states and cities.

"This issue has energized cities in my state like no other," said Feinstein, a Democrat, urging colleagues to support a simple two-year extension of the old moratorium, which would also ensure all transmission lines including DSL remained tax-free.

"City mayors are incensed we would pass a law without knowing with certainty how it would impact local revenues," Feinstein said.

Allen and Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat, said a two-year extension was too short.

A Democratic Senate staffer said lawmakers sensitive to states' concerns had also rejected a behind-the-scenes proposal from Allen, Wyden and Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona to keep the bill's wording without making the ban permanent.

Data Attacks Strike Spam Fighters

Ron Guilmette tried to cleanse the Internet of spam. For his good deed, he got himself cleansed from the Internet.

The Roseville, Calif.-based software developer is back online, but only after learning the hard way that fighting the junk e-mail business can be harmful to your financial health. Guilmette lost his Internet access and stood to lose his livelihood. Not only that, he said, local police and the FBI did little more than lend a sympathetic ear.

Spammers decided to take Guilmette down because he belonged to a small group of Internet vigilantes dedicated to wiping out junk e-mail, and they used a devious tool to do it.

That tool is the distributed denial-of-service attack, pronounced "DEE-doss" in techie circles. It's a crude, basic and very effective way of

enslaving personal computers - usually without the owner's knowledge. The hacker then uses the combined power of hundreds or thousands of hijacked computers to flood their target's network with data until it crashes.

Unlike viruses and worms, DDoS attacks are causing higher losses to businesses struggling to keep their networks afloat. A study released in May by the FBI and the Computer Security Institute found that DDoS attacks cost businesses \$66 million in 2002, compared to \$18 million in 2001.

By waging an under-funded battle against a group with little regard for the law, the spam fighters have offered themselves up as some of the first casualties to the growing problem of DDoS attacks.

They're not the last barrier between spam and the world's e-mail in-boxes - Internet service providers and major U.S. corporations have a variety of other tools at their disposal - but they provide an important resource to thousands of harried network administrators, and security experts say their loss would take away a valuable bulwark in the daily struggle to keep spam manageable.

"As the number of machines available to the attackers increases, more and more organizations are going to be able to be brought to their knees by people who are angry at them," said Allan Paller, director of research for the SANS Institute, a computer security firm based in Bethesda, Md. "There's no way for a small organization to stop it."

Guilmette's opinion of the bulk e-mail trade is anything but nuanced: "I hate spammers. To me they're just the slugs of the earth."

He started his anti-spam career in 1995 when he compiled a list of unsecured computers that could be hijacked easily and used to send spam. Posting the list on his Web site, monkeys.com, he warned universities, Wall Street brokerage houses and Fortune 500 companies to block e-mail messages from those computers.

Expanding his anti-spam efforts, Guilmette deployed unsecured "honey pot" computers on the Internet to see if any spammers would try to hijack them. The traps worked, and Guilmette reported the spammers to their Internet service providers. More than 100 of them had their accounts cancelled.

The spammers were not amused.

During a 10-day period in August, Guilmette's network was slammed by traffic from 4,000 computers around the world in a DDoS attack that dwarfed anything he'd seen before. Just as Guilmette was picking up the pieces, a second attack took him down a month later.

"Given that I've only got one little consumer DSL line, I lose," he said.

He was unable to get online, and his home software business, Infinite Monkeys & Co., began to atrophy. Finally, he took down the spam links on his Web site and posted an "unconditional surrender" on an Internet newsgroup used by spammers.

The attacks almost completely vanished.

Having lots of bandwidth is crucial to staying online during a DDoS attack, but it's expensive to buy. That means individual players like Guilmette don't stand much of a chance against the avalanche of processing power that a DDoS attack musters.

Bandwidth is a measurement of how much information a network can handle. The more bandwidth a network has, the bigger the denial-of-service attack has to be to bring it down. Having more bandwidth also allows networks to recover more quickly from attacks.

"The unfortunate state of affairs is that people who are trying to protect themselves find themselves in a really lousy arms race," said Ted Julian, co-founder and chief strategist for Arbor Networks, a Lexington, Mass.-based company that helps companies defend against denial-of-service attacks.

Guilmette said his anti-spam efforts will remain halted "unless some white knight rides to my rescue and gives me enough bandwidth to make me DDoS-proof."

Joe Jared - who maintained one of the Internet's most popular spam blacklists at Osirusoft.com - took a serious wallop earlier this year, he said.

"On August 26, I shut down my site. The attack was so large it took out two Qwest routers in Burbank," Jared said, referring to the devices that direct Internet traffic on his ISP's network. Losing the two routers snarled Internet traffic on that part of Qwest's network.

The attack hurt more than Osirusoft - Jared had merged data from several blacklists into one downloadable file he offered for free to some of the nation's largest technology companies.

"Between 10 and 15 percent of the e-mail worldwide was being checked against my file," Jared said, adding that SBC Communications, Pacific Bell and Ameritech were some of the companies that used his list.

Jared didn't make a dime off of his list, but he estimated that he lost more than \$10,000 in delayed orders when his online foot orthotics business was frozen in its tracks during the DDoS blizzard.

"An attack for a week or so, I can blow that off once in a while. But when it becomes a month, I need to have an answer. I had to take a course of action that would insure my business survives," he said.

Relying on the FBI to investigate turned out to be a dead end for Jared and Guilmette.

Guilmette explained his plight to an FBI operator. She put him through to a duty officer who, he said, never returned his call.

Jared also was unimpressed with the FBI response. "They were basically worthless."

"Law enforcement seems completely uninterested in helping," said Julian Haight, founder of the for-profit SpamCop Web site. "Until you're a Yahoo they just don't care."

Hal Hendershot, section chief of the FBI's computer intrusion section, disputed that claim.

"We don't pick the victims, and don't turn cases down. We look at all of these attacks as a criminal violation," Hendershot said. "A lot of it is going to depend on what data is available ... to track back to the source."

Some of that has to do with completeness of the company's own logs."

There are several organizations that have enough money to afford the bandwidth to fight spammers. The Spamhaus project - an international collective of spam fighters who maintain a widely used blacklist - has weathered heavy DDoS attacks for the past six months, said Spamhaus volunteer John Reid.

The attacks got more savage in September after Osirusoft's demise "seemed to embolden the people that were doing it," Reid said.

Spamhaus could have met the same fate as Osirusoft and Guilmette but it won much-needed cash investments to keep going. "Some people stepped up who had a lot of bandwidth available," Reid said, declining to name Spamhaus' silent benefactor.

With that backing, Spamhaus was able to move its servers off of a houseboat in the Thames where they'd been housed since 1997, Reid said.

Even the new bandwidth capability wasn't enough to keep Spamhaus running when hackers snared more than 5,000 computers for a DDoS attack in September. But with the increased server capacity, Spamhaus is able to recover quickly from such attacks, Reid said.

While SpamCop has been a target since its inception in 1998 in Seattle, Haight said the attacks "have gotten a lot more sophisticated and coordinated lately. It definitely did hit SpamCop and we had to take some rather expensive countermeasures to stop it."

None of the anti-spam crusaders can say for sure who was behind the attacks, but they know why.

"I'm being targeted because I'm effective in targeting spam, and the person targeting me is obviously a spammer or someone being paid by a spammer - it seems like a pretty easy conclusion," Haight said.

Campaign Starts Against Some 'Pop Up' Ads

Regulators disclosed a new legal campaign Thursday against an annoying method for delivering unwanted "pop-up" Internet advertisements, accusing a California company of "high-tech extortion" in its offers for software to block the very ads it was sending.

The courtroom effort by the Federal Trade Commission could dampen some of the most irritating practices by Internet marketers, who have learned ways to display intrusive messages on computer screens using a technology built into most versions of Microsoft Corp.'s Windows software.

"This is a shot across the bow," said Mark Rasch, an expert on technology law and former head of the Justice Department cyber-crimes division.

The FTC obtained a temporary restraining order against D-Squared Solutions LLC of San Diego from a U.S. District Court in Baltimore. The FTC's legal papers accuse D-Squared of unlawfully exploiting Microsoft's "Windows Messenger" feature by sending unwanted ads to Internet users as frequently as once every 10 minutes.

The director for the FTC's bureau of consumer protection, Howard Beales, said company executives were "creating a problem and trying to charge customers for the solution." He called that "high-tech extortion" and "a fundamentally unfair business model."

The FTC asked the judge to block D-Squared from sending any more advertisements or selling its ad-blocking software. It also wants D-Squared to repay consumers who bought its software, which Beales said represents "hundreds of thousands" of dollars.

The head of D-Squared Solutions, Anish Dhingra, declined to comment on the government's accusations. His lawyer, Jacob C. Reinbolt, did not return repeated telephone calls to his office from The Associated Press.

Windows Messenger - unrelated to Microsoft's instant-messaging software that uses the same name - commonly allows network administrators to display messages on a user's computer screen, such as a warning that a company's Internet connection might be having problems.

But some Internet marketers have seized upon the technology to display ads for software and pornography, unless computer users manually turn it off or use firewall software to block out unwanted messages. It takes seven mouse clicks to disable the messenger service; the FTC said typical consumers don't know how to do this.

"It seemed like they were appearing every 10 minutes. It completely disabled my computer," said Karen McKechnie of Annandale, Va., who complained to the FTC about pop-up advertisements. "People who are sending these messages are infringing on my rights and everyone's rights to use my computer."

The FTC's legal papers allege the advertisements caused "substantial injury" to consumers, citing lost data, crashed computers, frustration, annoyance and harassment. But Beales distinguished D-Squared's computer messages from other forms of Internet advertising that many computer users find just as nettlesome, such as unsolicited e-mails, unwanted instant-messages and pop-up ads on Web sites.

Last month, Microsoft separately warned customers about a security vulnerability in Windows Messenger that could allow hackers to seize control of a computer running most versions of Windows.

It urged computer users to download and install a free repairing patch from its Web site, and it said users should consider disabling the Messenger service immediately unless they need to use it. Hackers already are distributing tools to break into computers using the vulnerability.

Major Windows Changes Not Sought - Judge

An appeals judge appeared to deal a blow to challengers of Microsoft's antitrust settlement on Tuesday, agreeing that the court had never required the software giant to make some of the major changes competitors sought on the Windows operating system.

During arguments on the challenge by Massachusetts and two computer industry groups, Chief Judge Douglas Ginsburg said an earlier ruling by the court did not mean that Microsoft had to be held liable for commingling

features like the Internet Explorer browser with Windows.

"I think this is a very powerful answer and I didn't see any response to that" from the other side, said Ginsburg.

During a four-hour session before a six-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, the appeals judges aggressively pushed the Justice Department and Microsoft Corp. to defend the landmark settlement.

Some of the judges asked them to explain how the government's settlement with Microsoft had denied the company the "fruits" of its antitrust violations, and whether it would really do anything to stop Microsoft from crushing other potential competitors in the future.

"How do we know that?" Judge David Tatel asked Justice Department lawyer Deborah Majoras. "We should just accept that?"

The settlement was endorsed by District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly a year ago and gives computer makers greater freedom to feature rival software on their machines by allowing them to hide some Microsoft icons on the Windows desktop.

Massachusetts and the other dissenters argued that allowing computer makers to hide Microsoft icons was not enough. They said the court should force Microsoft to redesign Windows and stop commingling programs like Internet Explorer with Windows.

Another lower-court judge had concluded that the commingling had contributed to the demise of the rival Netscape Navigator browser.

In its 2001 ruling, the appeals court concluded that Microsoft's decision to commingle the computer code of Windows with the Internet Explorer browser was anti-competitive, but it also said some integration was legitimate in designing Windows.

Ginsburg said on Tuesday that in allowing Microsoft to continue commingling programs in Windows, Kollar-Kotelly was simply following instructions that the appeals court laid out in its previous ruling.

"How could (Kollar-Kotelly) now say it could no longer keep that part of its product design?" Ginsburg asked Massachusetts' lawyer.

The appeals court moved the case to Kollar-Kotelly in June 2001 after ruling that Microsoft had illegally maintained its Windows operating system monopoly, but rejected another lower court judge's proposal to break the company in two.

Lawyers for Massachusetts and two computer industry trade groups have challenged the settlement, saying it is ineffective and should be overturned and replaced with stricter sanctions.

In court proceedings last year, Kollar-Kotelly heard 32 days of testimony to determine what sanctions should be imposed on Microsoft, with Massachusetts and eight other states seeking stricter sanctions.

Kollar-Kotelly approved the settlement with minor changes. Eight of the nine hold-out states have since joined the settlement.

Microsoft argued successfully during last year's remedy hearings that more stringent sanctions would benefit only rivals like Oracle Corp. and Sun

Microsystems, while hurting consumers.

Court Eyes Microsoft Settlement Terms

A federal appeals court signaled lingering dissatisfaction Tuesday with significant provisions of the antitrust settlement that Microsoft Corp. negotiated with the Bush administration, hinting it may favor tougher sanctions against the world's largest software company.

Legal experts said it was unlikely the six-judge panel from the U.S. Circuit Court for the District of Columbia would accept as adequate only the sanctions that Microsoft accepted under the settlement, given the serious questions that some of the judges raised during a lively three-hour hearing.

"They surprised me," said Robert Lande, a University of Baltimore law professor who has followed the case closely. "I went into this thinking there was little probability they would do anything except rubber-stamp the settlement."

Circuit Judge Judith W. Rogers questioned lawyers about how the disputed antitrust settlement denies Microsoft the fruits of its illegal business practices toward its commercial rivals during the late 1990s. She said some penance was necessary; "Otherwise, monopolists could squelch all comers without consequence."

The judges appeared to acknowledge the settlement has not spurred the largest computer makers, for example, to install competing software from Microsoft's fiercest rivals, one principal aim of the landmark agreement.

Circuit Judge David S. Tatel said he "may agree" that computer makers still are discouraged from offering such rival software to consumers because Microsoft builds its own versions into its dominant Windows operating system, the engine that runs most of the world's personal computers.

Judge A. Raymond Randolph appeared convinced computer makers feared that confusion among customers over duplicate software programs would raise their technical support costs, cutting into already-thin profits.

The appeals court agreed in June 2001 that Microsoft illegally abused its monopoly with Windows software. It was expected to decide in coming months whether the Bush administration and 19 states negotiated adequate antitrust sanctions in a court-approved settlement.

The attorney general in one state, Tom Reilly of Massachusetts, and two anti-Microsoft trade organizations want tougher penalties. Reilly has argued that the settlement was so profoundly flawed that its approval by U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly represented an abuse of her discretion.

"There's no indication there's going to be a major reworking, but there is some reason to believe that a rubber stamp is not in order, either," said Andrew Gavil, a law professor at Howard University.

Robert Bork, former appeals judge representing Microsoft's rivals, told the circuit judges the settlement was "utterly inadequate." He complained that the government settled the case after it had already won significant

courtroom victories, which is highly unusual.

"The government had this case cold, and there was no reason to negotiate away the things it negotiated away," Bork said.

But the appeals court also appeared to question whether it should instruct Kollar-Kotelly to reconsider terms of the deal.

"Don't we owe any deference to the Department of Justice and the judge?" Tatel asked Bork. Bork responded no, and complained that some provisions of the antitrust settlement were too ambiguous to be enforced effectively.

"Some people find ambiguity in a no-smoking sign," Judge David B. Sentelle said.

Deborah Majoras, a deputy assistant attorney general at the Justice Department, said the settlement represented "prompt, certain and effective relief." She said Bork was "simply wrong" to suggest that the agreement hasn't already forced Microsoft to change its practices toward rivals.

Majoras stammered under unusually tough questions from the panel about the government's efforts to prevent the two anti-Microsoft trade groups from appealing the settlement.

But she also won praise from Chief Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg for her "very powerful answer" describing how one proposal to remove some Microsoft software from Windows might cause other programs to malfunction.

The appeals court generally has proved a favorable venue for Microsoft. It removed two other trial judges in 1995 and 2001 who ruled against the company, Stanley Sporkin and Thomas Penfield Jackson. It also overturned a contempt ruling against Microsoft by Jackson, and the court blocked Jackson's plans to break apart the company before it threw him off the case.

The same appeals court unanimously agreed, however, with Jackson's ruling that Microsoft had illegally abused its monopoly over Windows operating system software, and it instructed Kollar-Kotelly to impose new sanctions. Within months - and soon after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks - the sides instead negotiated the disputed settlement.

Google Unveils Web-Searching Software

Internet search engine Google has unveiled free software that lets people search the Web quickly - without launching a Web browser.

Google Deskbar, released Thursday, appears as a search box in the Windows toolbar. After the search words are entered, a resizable mini-viewer pops up with the results. Users can jump to the site within the mini-viewer or launch their browser.

Unless a program is filling the screen or the user has set the taskbar to automatically hide, the search box is always visible. With a keyboard shortcut, the cursor can be moved to it without moving the mouse.

Though the software is free, Google does get some exposure on the desktop: The company's logo appears faintly in the search box when words aren't

being typed into it.

Beyond Google's main search, the box can be set to search Google non-U.S. sites, Google News, Google Images and others. There are options to find stock quotes, movie reviews, word definitions and synonyms. Users can add custom sites to search, too.

The software, which is about 400 kilobytes, requires a PC with Windows XP or Windows 2000, at least Internet Explorer 5.5 and an Internet connection. Windows 95, 98 and ME are not supported. Google Deskbar also does not run on Macintosh or Linux computers.

The program was developed at Google Labs.

Microsoft Puts \$500,000 on Virus Writers' Heads

Microsoft Corp., beset by widespread criticism of security flaws in its software, on Wednesday put up a bounty to track down the authors of two computer bugs that choked the Internet earlier this year.

Microsoft offered two \$250,000 rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the Blaster worm and the SoBig.F e-mail virus, which infected more than half a million computers, crashed thousands of systems, and snarled Internet traffic across the globe in August and September.

The world's largest software company - which last month admitted that security concerns have begun to affect its bottom line - also said it had earmarked an additional \$4.5 million for future rewards.

Security headaches for Microsoft and its customers are likely to continue at least for the short term. The Federal Trade Commission has scheduled a news conference on Thursday to talk about a security hole in its Windows operating system.

The Wild West-style bounty underscored the threat posed by viruses and worms in an interconnected world, as well as the problems associated with catching those who originate them.

While SoBig.F and Blaster have caused little lasting damage, other cyberattacks have paralyzed automatic-teller machines, frustrated police dispatchers, and knocked nearly the entire country of South Korea offline. Security experts say future attacks could disable power plants, hospitals or other "critical infrastructure."

"These are not just Internet crimes, cybercrimes or virtual crimes. These are real crimes that hurt a lot of people," Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith said at a news conference, where he was joined by officials from the U.S. FBI, Secret Service, and Interpol, the international police agency.

Many of the most damaging viruses have spread through security holes in Microsoft products, leading to widespread criticism of the Redmond, Washington software maker.

Although computer security is an industry-wide problem, "we have clear responsibility to take a leadership role in addressing the issue," Smith said.

U.S. investigators have identified suspects behind three of the six Blaster variants, but have not yet tracked down the author of the original version, said Keith Lordeau, acting deputy assistant director of the FBI's cybercrime division.

The United States recently increased cybercrime penalties, but many other countries do not even have laws on the books. Still, perpetrators could face prosecution under existing theft or trespass laws, said Peter Nevitt, Interpol's director of information and technology systems.

Security experts familiar with the investigation said the trail had recently gone cold. The unprecedented cash lure could generate new leads and sow mistrust in the hacker community, sources said.

"Apparently, they haven't had too much luck, which is why they are resorting to offering money," said Mikko Hypponen, research manager at Finnish anti-virus firm F-Secure.

"There's certainly more of a motivation to reveal the identify of a virus writer than there was at this time yesterday," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at computer security firm Sophos Plc in the United Kingdom.

Informants will be eligible for the reward regardless of country of residence, Smith said, as long as the suspect is found guilty. Internet users can send tips to any FBI, Secret Service or Interpol office, or online at the Internet Fraud Complaint Center (<http://www.ifccfbi.gov>) or Interpol (<http://www.interpol.int>).

Virus Writers Dismiss Microsoft's Bounty

Cyberspace outlaws may look over their shoulder one extra time before launching a computer virus or worm, but they won't be deterred by the \$5 million bounty fund established by Microsoft to help capture and convict them, two virus writers said.

Applying Wild West-type bounties to modern Internet crimes, Microsoft on Wednesday put two \$250,000 rewards on the heads of the individuals responsible for unleashing the Blaster and Sobig worms that wreaked havoc in August. Another \$4.5 million was set aside for future bounties.

Microsoft hopes the money will make ill-intended code slingers think twice. "They should think 'uh-oh, there is somebody who knows what I am doing and they have an incentive to turn me in because there is a reward,'" said Hemanshu Nigam, a Microsoft corporate attorney.

However, two virus writers dismissed the bounty fund as a marketing stunt and said it will have no deterrent effect.

"This new initiative from Microsoft does not change anything. Virus writers who spread their viruses know very well that what they are doing is illegal," said Benny, a Czech member of virus writing group 29A in an interview via e-mail.

Although it "won't really scare" virus writers, they may become more careful about who they trust, said a member of virus writing group

International Knowledge Exchange, who asked to remain anonymous. "I think they may become more paranoid and not even tell their most trusted friends what they did," he said.

The virus writers side with Microsoft critics who say the company should focus on securing its software instead.

"The bounty program is just another excuse for Microsoft's buggy products," Benny said.

Both 29A and IKX describe themselves as groups of people who create and study computer viruses and worms, but never release malicious code. They send their code to antivirus companies who typically do a write-up and place the virus in the "zoo," a catalog of thousands of viruses that have never spread.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, which supported Microsoft's bounty fund announcement Wednesday, also does not think rewards alone will lead to fewer viruses and worms.

"We've never suggested that this reward will deter future hackers or criminal activity from authors of this type of code. What deters criminals is jail time. This reward offer is a step that potentially brings us closer to making an arrest, ultimately leading to a conviction and jail time," FBI spokesperson Paul Bresson said.

International law enforcement has had a tough time tracking down creators of viruses and worms. Only a few have been brought to justice. Arrests were made in connection with two variants of the Blaster worm, but those responsible for the original remain at large. No arrests have been made in connection with the Sobig worm, which was first detected in January.

Fighting crime in the virtual world is different from fighting real world crime in many ways, but it all comes down to getting the right lead, Bresson said. "Whether it is the virtual world or the real world where crimes are being committed, there are people who talk to each other, so there are people who have information that can help and we encourage those people to come forward," he said.

But law enforcement and Microsoft should not count on information coming from people close to virus writers, the IKX member said. "I think those people behind the widespread worms are not very talkative, especially after their actions got a little out of hand," he said.

Microsoft believes loyalty in online communities is not as strong as some people might think, Nigam said. Furthermore, it is not just members of the Internet's underground that have information which can lead to the arrest and conviction of those who release malicious code, he said.

"Information is everywhere. A systems administrator's system might get attacked; he may have log files and information that he should come forward with," Nigam said.

Microsoft has been widely criticized for not doing enough to protect computer users from security problems. The woes are also affecting the company's bottom line. In reporting financial results for the quarter ended September 30, the Microsoft said sales to corporations had been hurt by the Blaster worm.

Creating secure software is now a top priority at Microsoft and the reward

program is only part of that effort, Nigam said. "This is one aspect of our multipronged approach, securing products and writing code that is more secure is going to remain a priority as it has been for a long time now," he said.

Internet Littered With Dead Web Sites

Despite the Internet's ability to deliver information quickly and frequently, the World Wide Web is littered with deadwood - sites abandoned and woefully out of date.

After Ajay Powell quit smoking and decided to run the Honolulu Marathon in 2001, she created a Web site to track her progress, updating it weekly with photographs and tallies of her training miles.

Powell updated it again the following year when she entered a seven-day, 585-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. But the site has nothing on her results in that ride or any other endurance events Powell has since tackled.

Her site remains frozen in time.

Like many others who enthusiastically start Web sites and Web journals known as blogs, Powell lost interest. The Internet's novelty wore off.

"It was 100 percent the first two or three months of my training for the marathon, then I started to get resentful at having to put these pictures up," said Powell, who lives in Stockton, Calif. "It got increasingly tedious to keep up. I just let that thing go to pot."

One study of 3,634 blogs found that two-thirds had not been updated for at least two months and a quarter not since Day One.

"Some would say, 'I'm going to be too busy but I'll get back to it,' but never did," said Jeffrey Henning, chief technology officer with Perseus Development Corp., the research company that did the study. "Most just kind of stopped."

Other sites die because an event came and went - political campaigns end, the new millennium arrived without computer-generated catastrophe.

The Year 2000 site for Massachusetts still urges citizens to stock up on supplies and withdraw money in case cash machines and credit cards fail. Igor Sidorkin's personal collection of Y2K software fixes gets 30 or so visitors daily - mostly to download patches they should have installed four years ago.

Cliff Kurtzman kept his Year2000.com site up for two years past the turnover, with a note acknowledging that the information could be old. But even abandoned sites deserve a burial at some point.

"There was so much on it that was out of date, and links that didn't work and everything," he said. "It looked bad to have things up there with so many things not working or making sense anymore."

Kurtzman, who uses the site now to promote a newsletter on business and innovation, knows the troubles abandoned sites like his can pose. He'll

find a site he likes, only to learn later the information is old.

"Having extra junk out there just makes the process of searching for good stuff even harder," Kurtzman said.

But just as libraries wouldn't think of dumping musty, out-of-print books, Web designers shouldn't rush to remove yesteryear's castoffs, said Steve Jones, a communications professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"I do hear pretty frequently not so much that there's deadwood, but that sites go away without a trace," Jones said.

Many sites cost money to maintain. Unless they use a free service like Geocities or have a friend willing to lend space, developers of Web sites must pay fees for Web hosting and domain names.

Few are like Alan Porter and Anand Ranganathan, willing to pay \$14 a year to keep the domain name Votexchange2000.com, which in 2000 let users in one state trade their vote for president to someone in another state. The site runs off a computer under Ranganathan's desk at work.

Porter said they are keeping it around as a historical artifact, though that can't last forever as technology changes. Parts of the site, for instance, won't work with newer browsers.

But neglect is a more common reason that sites linger past their prime.

The mayor of Seaside, Ore., Don Larson, remains a candidate on his campaign Web site, though he won last year's election. The site's designers hadn't gotten around to updating it, though after being contacted by The Associated Press, "please vote" was quietly removed.

Management of the Computer Coalition for Responsible Exports changed hands early this year and updating the Web site remains on the new organizers' "to do" list. In the meantime, you can view press releases through March 7, 2002.

A fan site for the TV show "Melrose Place" also remains static. Though the site promises "new additions" beyond the final episode, its home page proudly announces, "News Last Updated 05/24/99" - the date of the finale.

And a site recording Debbie Busler's six-continent, 26-country tour last year has yet to leave the Americas. Though she returned home 13 months ago, she remains at country No. 4 online.

Her brother and webmaster, Marty, ran into time-consuming technical troubles and vows to finish the job - one day.

"She had a lot of tips that were pretty good for people traveling around the world, even specific hotels, what to do, what she would have skipped," he said. "I would love to finish it."

But he added, "I've also got a full-time job and a part-time job and I like to sleep."

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